FA x FSA STRUCTURED DIALOGUE MEETING

2.30pm – 4.30pm
Friday 25 October 2024
WNSL Boardroom
Wembley Stadium

FSA Attendees:

Tim Payton (Arsenal Supporters' Trust)

Neil Dady (Wolves 1877 Trust)

Heather Alderson (Charlton Athletic Supporters' Trust)

Adam Willerton (Leeds United Supporters' Trust)

Matthew Kempson (North Ferriby FC)

Andy Walsh (Head of National Game and Community Ownership, FSA)

Garreth Cummins (National Game Network Manager, FSA)

Jude Morris King (Manchester City Women)

Chris Paouros (Spurs Women/ FSA Vice Chair and FA Councillor)

Deborah Dilworth (Free Lionesses)

Thomas Concannon (Free Lions)

Kevin Miles (CEO, FSA)

Tom Greatrex (Chair, FSA and FA Councillor)

Katrina Law (FSA x FA Structured Dialogue Lead)

FA Attendees:

Mark Bullingham (CEO)

James MacDougall (Head of Corporate Affairs)

Sophie Levin (Structured Dialogue Lead and FA Senior External Affairs Manager)

Joanna Manning-Cooper (Director of Marketing, Communications and Public Affairs)

Andy Ambler (Director of Professional Game Relations)

David Newton (Head of Player Status and Competitions)

MEETING REPORT

This meeting followed on from the June 2024 session at St James' Park, Newcastle, as part of the FA x FSA commitment to Structured Dialogue, outlined by the Terms of Reference linked here. It took place ahead of the Lionesses v Germany fixture at Wembley Stadium on Friday 25 October 2024.

1. Outstanding actions from June 24 meeting

There were no outstanding actions from the June meeting that were not covered elsewhere in the October agenda.

2. Men's FA Cup

Replays in qualifying rounds of the FA Cup

FSA reps opened this section of the meeting by sharing the results of their recent survey on FA Cup replays in qualifying rounds. More than 800 responses from fans of Steps 1-6 clubs in the National League system had found that 91% were in favour of keeping replays in qualifying rounds with revenue, tradition, and sense of fairness being cited. The FSA agreed to share the findings of the survey with the FA.

ACTION

FSA to share survey findings on FA Cup replays in qualifying rounds with the FA.

The FA committed to undertaking a thorough survey of Steps 1-6 clubs to gauge opinions on replays in qualifying rounds and committed to full consultation directly with the clubs in question. They also encouraged fans to make their clubs aware of their views on replays to inform those responses. The FSA agreed to help mobilise fans when necessary.

ACTION

The FA to inform the FSA of timings for the club consultation. The FSA to inform and engage fans in a timely manner.

The new National League System Board for both the Men's and Women's game had met for the first time this summer, and the issue of replays had been discussed, with a range of views on show. FSA Vice Chair, Chris Paouros is an observer on the NLSB.

Prize money in FA Cup qualifying rounds

There was an outstanding action from the June meeting for the FA to check the prize money from FA Cup qualifying rounds v 2004. Prize money had stood at £1.3m in 2004 and was now £2m.

FA Cup broadcast schedule

There was a brief discussion around the games broadcast in the FA Cup. Related to this was positive mention of the BBC games shown online in the preliminary rounds and the important role they played in showcasing non-league football.

The FA committed to provide the FSA with a summary of the full FA Cup Broadcast schedule for 2024/25, and to share viewing figures from last season's competition. ITV and BBC remained the domestic broadcast partners for 2024/25, before moving to TNT and BBC for the 2025/26 season onwards.

ACTION

The FA to share 2024/25 Broadcast schedule and audience figures for 2023/24 with the FSA.

Men's FA Cup Semi-Final and Final Ticket Pricing

The FA discussed the process for confirming Emirates FA Cup Semi-Final and Final ticket prices for 2025 and took feedback from the FSA.

3. Men's and Women's Internationals

England Men's new head coach

The FA provided an update on the appointment of the new men's England manager. The recruitment process began after the EURO 2024 Final and a diverse group of candidates were considered for the role.

Cost of coaching badges

The FSA raised media comment around the cost of coaching badges. It was felt that the examples used had been extremes, with the real costs sitting somewhere in the middle of the examples published. Bursaries and subsidies were available, also. Not all applicants were accepted to the higher courses as they weren't ready for them at that point in time.

A discussion followed around the coaching pathway in the Women's game, and the difficulties in obtaining an A licence. It was agreed for the FA to follow up with the FSA on coaching opportunities in the Women's game.

ACTION

The FA to discuss coaching opportunities in the Women's game with the FSA.

England Supporters Travel Club membership

The FSA noted that ESTC membership now exceeded 27,000 and as such was having an impact on ticket availability. 11,000 £25 tickets are available at home games. The FSA asked for an increase in the number of £25 tickets for ESTC members.

The FSA also noted that the pricing of away internationals was becoming a concern. Football Supporters Europe is supportive of a price cap and is in the early stages of lobbying relevant stakeholders on this issue.

The FSA asked the FA to back their calls for larger away allocations. The 5% UEFA rule was limiting the number of tickets available for England away games considerably. The example of the upcoming game in Greece was cited as one where insufficient tickets in the away sector would lead to away fans in home areas. The FA would like other associations to make similar requests alongside them for greater impact with UEFA.

There was also a recommendation from the FSA for the FA to engage with the ESTC members via fan forums or other forms of consultation.

ACTIONS:

The FA to review ticket availability for ESTC members for home games at Wembley.
The FA to consider further fan engagement with ESTC members.

UEFA 2024 debrief and Men's Euro 2028 update

The FSA stated that the partnership with the FA and the supporters working group had worked exceptionally well in Germany. The fan initiatives had also been excellent. A meeting is scheduled with the FA and FSA to begin discussions around Euro 2028 planning in November 2024.

UEFA Women's Euro 2025 update

The FSA felt they would be better placed to update on arrangements for Euro 2025 at the next meeting, when there would be more proactive plans in place between the FA and FSA.

Various challenges ranging from ticket sales mechanisms to the cost of accommodation in Switzerland were raised, with a big concern being transport provisions after late matches. The FSA stressed there were lots of loan travellers in the women's game who needed to be considered.

The FSA via Free Lionesses is leading on Fan Walks and Fan Moments for England fans in Switzerland and will liaise with the FA on planned activity.

4. Regulations and Governance

Football Governance Bill

The Football Governance Bill had its first reading in the House of Lords earlier in the week. Most of the amendments proposed by the FSA had been incorporated, importantly including those around fan engagement. The FSA expressed its support for the bill in its current state, as did the FA.

A discussion around the definition of consultation followed, with the FSA raising the Gunning Principles as their preferred mechanism for consultation.

Owners and Directors Test

The FA provided an update on the OADT with Steps 1-4 now finalised ahead of consultation with stakeholders.

Regulatory framework to check sources of funds

The FSA has historically raised supporter concerns around the activities of individuals with no visible means of income becoming involved in football. It asked whether the FA has any plans to amend its regulatory framework to address the threat to the game posed by the laundering of illicit funds.

The FA responded that issues of illegal activity are the domain of the police and law enforcement agencies. The FA Sporting Integrity department does investigate matters that they are made aware of but rely on information and evidence being provided.

The FSA registered the concerns of members that when a matter of integrity has been raised with the FA, the contact is acknowledged but there is no further feedback given. It was agreed that the FSA would bring forward suggestions for improving intelligence gathering and reporting for further consideration.

ACTION

FSA to share suggestions for improving intelligence gathering and reporting in cases of sporting integrity with the FA.

5. Playing domestic matches overseas

Further to the motion opposing the playing of competitive fixtures overseas passed at the FSA AGM in July, the FSA asked for the FA's position on this subject. The FSA noted that FIFA had established a working group and asked if the FA were represented on that. The FA confirmed group members were confederations, so not directly.

The FA confirmed that every game played in England, and every game played by English teams abroad, would be subject to FA approval. The FA again stated its concerns around end of season tours They confirmed there was no intention of taking FA Cup games overseas.

The FSA urged for consultation with fans should Clubs or Leagues approach the FA for approval to move competitive games abroad in the future.

6. Refereeing and VAR

The FSA summarised the VAR Match Day Experience motion passed at the summer AGM and stated its view that supporters have been left in isolation with no clear set of protocols in place for communications around delayed VAR reviews inside stadia. The lack of consistency around informing fans at games of reviews and the lack of connectivity were resulting in a poor match day experience. The FSA expressed its support to transition to live in stadia announcements and urged the PGMOL to consult with other sports outside of football to share best practice.

The FA responded that IFAB and the PGMOL had taken learnings from a wide range of sports and would continue to do so. The FA agreed that the fan in the stadium should have no less information than the fan watching at home but cautioned that the broadcasting of conversations between the VAR and on-field referee was some way from being implemented in the Premier League. The FA has representation on the PGMOL Board and improving communications with fans at matches is a live, on-going discussion, with further challenges arising from the lack of screens at certain Premier League grounds.

7. Next Meeting Dates

The next session will be scheduled for the early part of 2025 with dates tbc.